

THE MATERIAL CULTURE

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a *santo*. *Mole poblano* (or "turkey mole" [S. *mole de guajolote*; N. *huexolomolli*]) in Tepoztlán may be made of as many as nineteen ingredients. It is always served with turkey and only on the occasion of very important *fiestas*, characteristically weddings and baptisms. 252 262

Another category, *tortas*, includes vegetables, potatoes, etc., which are ground, mixed with egg, fried, and served with *chile*. These represent an application of the aboriginal grinding- and *chile*-patterns to introduced foods. [777]

The cultivated and purchased foods are supplemented with a number of wild vegetable foods and occasionally game. 262

It will be observed that a very few techniques of cookery are employed. Foods are boiled, fried, or toasted. In spite of the presence of the oven, used by bakers and pastry-makers, domestic food is never roasted or baked. 252

Three meals a day are generally eaten. *Tortillas* and beans are found at nearly every meal; often there is little or nothing else. Meat is most frequently added. 264

The commonest beverage is coffee, home grown and toasted. Chocolate, the aboriginal drink, is everywhere known but its use is restricted by its cost. When made, it is beaten to a froth in the ancient manner. Milk is not rarely drunk, but usually sweetened with sugar or flavored with chocolate; it is almost never used as an ingredient in cookery. A variety of "teas" are made of native and also of introduced herbs and seeds. Commercial sugar-cane alcohol is largely drunk by the 272 252 273

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264 is usually prepared as *clemole*, boiled and served with a sauce of *chiles*. This is a favorite breakfast dish.

[556] The wealthier and more sophisticated buy baker's bread for the morning and the evening meals, but eat *tortillas* too. The afternoon meal is much the same; it is likely to be the heaviest meal of the day. Then may be eaten lima beans toasted, or *tortas*, or perhaps chick-peas. Coffee or chocolate, and less commonly milk, may be drunk at any meal.

• [272] Intimately, when only the family is present, all sit together on the ground beside the hearth and eat.

[556] (Of course the well-to-do use tables.) If male company

[562] is present, the man sits with the guests and they are served by his wife, who eats alone. After breakfast

512 the man goes to the field, or to his workbench; the wife resumes her domestic labors. The last sound at night, when all other sounds but the braying of *burros* and the barking of dogs have failed, is the slap-slap of the *tortillera* and the subdued, wet, rubbing sound of the maize-grinder.

252 A large share of the woman's life and interests is taken up with the *metate*, that ancient grinding-stone

462 that has not changed in form or function for thousands of years. For some ten years a small steam mill

[412] has been in operation in Tepoztlán;¹ to this the women may bring their maize to be ground. But that most

[256] of the maize is, nevertheless, ground on domestic *metates* is due not only to the fact that mill-ground maize

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¹ This is owned and operated not by a Tepoztecan but by a man from Xochimilco, Federal District.

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262 provide food elements which the Tepoztecan diet would otherwise lack, since there
 222 is little cultivation of leafy green vegetables. But it is impossible to determine to
 [244] what extent wild greens are consumed, because they are considered very poor fare,
 [735] and Tepoztecans do not readily admit eating them. During times of scarcity a
 [722] large number of families eat wild greens in quantity several times a week, and the
 chronically poor eat them regularly throughout the year. During the Revolution
 many families escaped starvation by subsisting almost entirely on wild plants. The
 names of most of these plants are native Indian terms, and are as follows:

quintoniles
verdolaga
tesquite
pipisacos

papalo
chipiles
tequesquite
quelites

[272] Violets boiled with *tequesquite* are also eaten. The herbs are well-known spices,
 and medicinal grasses or leaves are used to make a variety of teas.

262 Additional fruits and vegetables are brought in by traveling merchants or are
 [439] purchased in the large market in Cuernavaca. However, most of these are expensive
 [556] and only the few well-to-do families of Tepoztlán can afford to purchase them more
 or less regularly. Foods not locally produced and commonly purchased in the stores
 262 of Tepoztlán, Yautepec, Cuernavaca, or Mexico City are bread,¹ sugar, salt, rice,
 177 certain types of chile and beans, noodles, and dried codfish. Chocolate is also pur-
 [439] chased but is considered a luxury. Foods which are slowly becoming more popular
 but which are still purchased by a small minority are evaporated and powdered
 milk, canned sardines, tomato herring, or other fish.

The eating of white bread made of wheat flour is of particular interest in Mexico,
 since it is a relatively new trait and one which has been taken to indicate the degree
 of acculturation of individuals and groups. In Tepoztlán, bread is considered a very
 [556] desirable food; and often the social and economic status of a family is judged in
 terms of the amount of bread that it consumes. From the Mexican Census of 1940,
 which included a question designed to estimate the number of persons who eat
 bread fairly regularly, we learned that over 31 per cent of the population of Tepoz-
 tlán eat bread. At present there is scarcely a family that does not eat some bread dur-
 [855] ing the week or month, though it may be but once or twice. It is especially favored
 [735] as a food for very small children, and even the poorest family seeks to provide a
 piece of bread daily for its youngest child. There is no indication, however, that
 [556] bread will eventually displace the tortilla; at most, bread consumption among well-
 to-do families may represent about 10 per cent of the total food expenditure.

262 There is, of course, much variation in the actual consumption of food. Except
 [556] among the wealthier families, irregularity in diet is characteristic throughout the
 year, and few families maintain a uniformly good diet from day to day even accord-
 ing to local standards. The type and quantity of food consumed is determined by
 the season, the fiesta calendar, and, most of all, the amount of cash on hand. "When

¹ Bread is baked locally, but wheat flour is purchased outside.

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264 men carry their breakfast with them, to be warmed and eaten later. (See Fig. 40.) They may eat once again at noon and have their dinner when they arrive home, at any time from 5:00 to 9:00 P.M.

[562] When they eat at home they are usually served first and receive preferential treat-
[855] ment. The women and children who remain at home eat breakfast at 7:00 or 8:00 A.M., dinner at about 1:00 P.M., and supper at dusk. Younger children are generally fed before the mother and the older daughter sit down to eat. In most homes the

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[516]



Fig. 40. Men eating in the fields.

[352] members of the family sit on low chairs or stools, or the women and children sit
[562] on the floor. Very few families use a table except during a fiesta meal, and then it is only for the men and guests. Likewise, knives and forks are generally reserved for fiesta times only. The mother serves, handing each person his food in a bowl or wrapped in a tortilla. Spoons may be used, but food is usually eaten with the tortilla as a spoon.

272 For most people, breakfast consists of black coffee and tortilla. Some take milk
264 in their coffee and eat bread instead of tortilla; some eat toasted meat or warmed-
735 over beans. During hard times, poorer families drink tea made from cinnamon or
178 local herbs instead of coffee. It should be remembered that coffee drinking is a
757 relatively new phenomenon among the poor; in the late nineteenth century only
273 the *caciques* could afford it. Today, tea drinking is associated with poverty or ill-
751 ness, for many of the teas are used to cure stomach-ache, colds, sore throats, etc.*

*In many families it is customary for the father to begin the day with a drink of alcohol. Similarly, when the peasants return from the fields at night, they generally take a drink of alcohol to counteract *los aires* and to avoid taking cold.

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Dinner, the most substantial meal, is eaten in the middle of the day whenever possible. It may consist of beans, tortilla, and chile. A good dinner, according to the Tepostecan view, should include meat cooked with some vegetables, a bowl of rice or noodles cooked in broth, and the inevitable beans, tortillas, and chile. Coffee may or may not be taken at the end of dinner. Supper generally consists of coffee and tortillas or bread, with perhaps a piece of cheese. 264

Variety is provided by changing the type of meat or by using fish and by varying the vegetables. Fruit, peanuts, sugar cane, candies, cookies, and other sweets are eaten between meals and are generally not regarded as food to be included in a meal. The taste for sweets is developing among the children, particularly school children, and they are becoming more demanding of their parents in this respect. [272]

To get a better notion of the quantities of food consumed, as well as of the variety, we will examine a typical weekly food budget of a well-to-do family and of a poor family. (See Tables 48 and 49.) The prosperous family selected is in the upper economic group and is one of the more respected, educated families in the village. At the time of our study, the family consisted of the parents and an adult son and daughter. Both the son and daughter had received considerably more education than is common, and both had lived in Mexico City with relatives. [77]

The other family is one of the poorest in the village. The father is a *tlacolero* and works alone to support his wife and seven young children. An older daughter left home to work as a servant in Cuernavaca, but she contributes nothing to the family. The ages of the children at home range from an infant-in-arms to fifteen years. Both families were observed during the summer months before the harvest in the year 1944. The slight differences in some of the prices were due to local fluctuations; the smaller quantities purchased by the poor family sometimes resulted in higher costs. The weekly budgets represent a summary of daily expenditures directly observed or estimated by our field workers. 262
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A comparison of the weekly food budgets reveals that, although Family I has fewer mouths to feed, it spends three times more on food and consumes consistently more of every food item, with the exception of corn, green chile, lard, and salt. Its weekly diet provides greater variety, more sources of protein and more of the highly prized "luxury" foods. The corn-beans-chile-complex mentioned earlier makes up only 13 per cent of the diet of Family I and 46.9 per cent of that of Family II. Taken alone, corn represents 34 per cent of the food expenditure of the poor family and 9 per cent of that of the well-to-do family.* Despite this, the latter consumes only $2\frac{1}{2}$ *cuartillos* less corn a week. If we consider those food items which are consumed daily or in the greatest quantities weekly by the poor family, we find that corn, beans, green chile, lard, wild greens, coffee, sugar, salt, and green tomatoes make up 83 per cent of the expenditure of this family. These foods may be said to be the real core of their diet. The same foods take up only 22 per cent of the expenditure of the other family.

* During certain times of the year some Tepostecan families live on a diet which consists of from 50 to 70 per cent corn.

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529 two tables and the other with three. Gambling has not developed to any marked
[525] degree, and consists of small occasional bets. Despite the pessimistic evaluations of the older people there is no evidence that the presence of the poolrooms has encouraged vice or has helped to develop any new bad habits. Rather it seems to have provided a harmless and much needed diversion for the young men.

275 Shortly after the road was built, a man from Mexico City attempted to establish
[548] a cabaret in Tepoztlán providing "hostesses," dancing, and drinking. The boys and young men responded with vigor, using such desperate methods as stealing from their parents or selling chickens to raise the necessary money. The adults were aroused and drove out the owner and his staff and have managed to prevent any such new establishments. At the present time there are two *cantinas* for drinking purposes only. Before 1926 the men of the village drank punch, pure alcohol, and *mescal*. Since the road there has been an increase in beer and *tequila* drinking, and the "Cuba Libre" has been introduced.

273 Tepoztecs have always been strong drinkers, but there are fewer habitual drunkards here than in some of the surrounding villages. From 1935 to 1938 there was more drinking than there is today because alcohol was much cheaper.
[435] Within the last few years, alcohol has risen in price from 40 centavos to 5 pesos per liter. The prohibitive cost of alcohol has been responsible, in part, for the return to the use of pulque. In 1942 a *pulquería* was opened in the plaza. "Soft" drinks such as Coca-Cola, lemonade, and other carbonated drinks are also sold in the village.
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[272]

546 In 1939, moving pictures were shown for the first time. Movie equipment was installed in the school and there were nightly performances. After one month the entrepreneur moved out because of the small attendance. Since then, there have been two or three other unsuccessful attempts. To most Tepoztecs the admission charge of 30 to 50 centavos is prohibitive.

536 From time to time a puppet show reaches Tepoztlán and runs for about a week. This, together with several school plays each year, comprises the theatrical entertainment. In 1943, there were no radios in Tepoztlán; their costliness and the absence of electricity ruled them out.¹⁵ However, there are 44 victrolas in the village.

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405 Thirty of these belong to families in the three larger barrios and the others are distributed in each of the smaller ones.

517 In the past two years the church has endeavored to take a more active part in providing leisure-time activities for Tepoztecs. The Acción Católica has been greatly strengthened and its membership extended. Different age groups within it have separate meetings and elect officers. The activities include singing, presenting religious pageants and plays, attending funerals, celebrating saints' days, and receiving instruction in various subjects, both religious and secular. It also provides religious reading matter and organizes religious pilgrimages. Money-raising activities continue throughout the year through collections, *hermeses*, and even public dances, although the Acción has forbidden its female members to dance. Once or

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¹⁵ In 1948, several families owned battery-operated radios and some people were regular listeners to dramatic and humorous programs originating in Mexico City.